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TELEGRAM

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ACTION SS-25

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 /026 W

114300

P R 171315Z SEP 73
 FM AMEMBASSY KABUL
 TO SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 5114
 INFO AMEMBASSY ISLAMABAD
 AMEMBASSY LONDON
 AMEMBASSY MOSCOW
 AMEMBASSY NEW DELHI
 AMEMBASSY TEHRAN

SECTION 1 OF 2 KABUL 6755

DEPT PASS CINCPAC FOR POLAD

E. O. 11652: GDS
 TAGS: PGOV, PINT, PFOR, AF
 SUBJECT: FUTURE OF THE DAUD REGIME

REF: (A) KABUL 6729 (NOTAL); (B) KABUL 6377; (C) KABUL 6054

1. SUMMARY: TWO MONTHS AFTER COUP DAUD SITS ASTRIDE NEW REGIME BUT DOES NOT YET FULLY CONTROL IT. INDICATIONS OF TENSION WITH YOUNG MILITARY COUP LEADERS CONTINUE TO ABOUND, THOUGH OUTWARDLY ALL IS CALM. BEHIND SCENES BATTLES GOING ON OVER (A) PACE AND DEGREE OF MARXIST ORIENTATION OF CHANGE, (B) EXTENT OF PURGE OF PEOPLE AND PRACTICES ASSOCIATED WITH ILL-FATED DECADE-LONG "DEMOCRATIC EXPERIMENT," AND (C) DEGREE TO WHICH WESTERN ORIENTATION OF COUNTRY WILL SHIFT NORTHWARD TOWARD USSR. PROCESS OF GOVERNMENT FORMATION THEREFORE INEVITABLY SLOW AND COMPLICATED BY INTRICATE FAMILY RELATIONSHIPS AS WELL AS BY FERVENT ANTI-CORRUPTION CAMPAIGN. MAY TAKE UP TO SIX MONTHS TO KNOW WHETHER DAUD FULLY MASTER IN OWN HOUSE. COUNTER-COUP EFFORTS LIKELY IN WEEKS AHEAD, BUT MOST LIKELY FORM WOULD BE "COUP" BY DAUD HIMSELF TO REMOVE SOME OF HIS RADICAL ALLIES. SOVIET ROLE REMAINS MYSTERIOUS, THOUGH MANY ARE CONVINCED THEY HAD INTIMATE RELATIONSHIP TO PLOT.

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DAUD PROFESSES TO WANT MORE US AND OTHER FOREIGN HELP AND TO BE DETERMINED MAINTAIN INDEPENDENCE, WHILE EXTRACTING ALL POSSIBLE SOVIET SUPPORT ON HIS OWN TERMS. WE ACCEPT THIS AS LIKELY TO BE HIS TRUE POSITION, AND THINK ODDS CONSIDERABLY BETTER THAN EVEN THAT HE WILL SUCCESSFULLY CONSOLIDATE CONTROL IN WEEKS AHEAD.

2. TWO MONTHS HAVE NOW ELAPSED SINCE THE SUDDEN COUP WHICH BROUGHT MOHAMMAD DAUD BACK TO POWER IN AFGHANISTAN. POLITICAL SITUATION REMAINS UNSTABLE AND IN MANY RESPECTS FRAGILE. THIS UNDERSCORED BY RECENT SRF SUMMARY, AND THAT GLOOMY PICTURE RECEIVES SOME FURTHER DARK BRUSH STROKES IN USAID'S LENGTHY STATUS REPORT ON ALL US ASSISTANCE ACTIVITIES IN COUNTRY (REF A). ALTHOUGH THE AID PICTURE IS MIXED, WITH SOME REAL BRIGHT SPOTS, THE TWO REPORTS ARE NOT INHERENTLY CONTRADICTORY. WE ARE OPERATING IN AN ENVIRONMENT WHICH INEVITABLY PRODUCES SOME DIFFERENCES IN PERSPECTIVE, DEPENDING ON THE SOURCES FROM WHICH OUR REPORTS ARE TAKEN. KABUL IS EVEN MORE THAN USUAL A HOTBED OF RUMOR, HALF TRUTHS, AND HARDLY DISINTERESTED INFORMANTS. ACCESS TO FORMER SOURCES IS BEING STEADILY RESTRICTED OR MADE LESS USEFUL AS THE NEW REGIME MOVES TO REPLACE MANY INDIVIDUALS FORMERLY IN KEY POSITIONS. AND THE EXTRAORDINARILY CENTRALIZED NATURE OF DECISION-MAKING MAKES IT EVEN MORE DIFFICULT TO RELY ON INFORMATION OBTAINED FROM MIDDLE OR UPPER LEVEL CONTACTS. IN THE MOSAIC WE CAN ONLY SEE CERTAIN PIECES, AND THEY REFLECT ONLY DIMLY THOSE WHICH ARE MISSING. NONETHELESS, WE WANT TO TRY TO ANALYZE THE REGIME'S PROSPECTS, REMEMBERING ALL THE CAVEATS IMPLIED ABOVE.

3. ONE ADDITIONAL CAUTION: ONE SHOULD NOT ACCEPT TOO READILY PREDICTIONS THAT DAUD WILL FAIL. THERE IS INEVITABLY A NEGATIVE PSYCHOLOGICAL IMPACT ON ALL FOREIGN OBSERVERS HERE PRODUCED BY THEIR BEING SLOWLY CUT OFF FROM OLD FRIENDS OR TRADITIONAL SOURCES OF INFORMATION AND WATCHING UNHAPPILY THE STEADY REIMPOSITION OF A POLICE STATE ATMOSPHERE LARGELY ABSENT DURING THE PAST DECADE WHILE DAUD WAS OUT OF POWER.

4. THE FUTURE OF THE DAUD REGIME IS BEING FOUGHT OUT ON AT LEAST THREE DIFFERENT LEVELS. THE BATTLEFIELDS OVERLAP, AND THIS CONFUSED MELEE MAKES PREDICTION ESPECIALLY DANGEROUS.

A. AS WE HAVE REPORTED REPEATEDLY IN PAST WEEKS, DAUD IS NOT YET MASTER IN HIS OWN HOUSE, SITTING ASTRIDE A CENTRAL COMMITTEE HEAVILY WEIGHTED WITH YOUNG MILITARY OFFICERS WHO PLANNED AND

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CARRIED OUT THE COUP. MOST SPENT A NUMBER OF YEARS TRAINING IN THE USSR AND ARE UNDOUBTEDLY IMPRESSED WITH MANY OF THE ACCOMPLISHMENTS OF THE SOVIET REGIME. THEIR CONFLICT WITH DAUD LIKELY INVOLVES AT LEAST THREE ELEMENTS: FIRST, A PREDILICION FOR RADICAL MARXIST SOLUTIONS VERSUS DAUD'S HIGHLY CENTRALIZED BUT CAUTIOUS, MORE TRADITIONAL AUTHORITARIANISM; SECOND, THE IMPATIENCE OF YOUGH AND INEXPERIENCE SUDDENLY SAVORING ENORMOUS POLITICAL POWER FOR THE FIRST TIME, VERSUS DAUD'S LONG EXPERIENCE IN STATECRAFT AND THE AFGHAN TRADITION OF DEFERRING TO AGE AND SENIORITY IN LEADERS; AND THIRD, A REVOLUTIONARY URGE TO OVERTURN TRADITIONAL TRIBAL AND FAMILY AUTHORITY PATTERNS VERSUS THE CONTINUING STRENGTH THAT THOSE PATTERNS HOLD FOR MOST AFGHANS. THESE STRUGGLES ARE BEING FOUGHT OUT IN THE CONTEXT OF DECISIONS ABOUT MINISTERS AND KEY PERSONNEL BELOW THE MINISTERIAL LEVEL, AND HELP TO EXPLAIN THE SLOWNESS WITH WHICH THE NEW REGIME IS TAKING FORM. DAUD HAS APPARENTLY BEEN USING FABIAN TACTICS IN DEALING WITH HIS CENTRAL COMMITTEE COLLEAGUES, PERHAPS BIDDING HIS TIME TO DEMONSTRATE THE INABILITY OF MANY NEW OFFICIALS TO CARRY OUT THEIR ASSIGNED FUNCTIONS BEFORE INSISTING ON THEIR REPLACEMENT.

B. ON THE SECOND BATTLEGROUND DAUD, WITH THE PROBABLY ENTHUSIASTIC SUPPORT OF HIS YOUNGER COLLEAGUES, IS DETERMINED TO PURGE AS MANY TRACES AS POSSIBLE OF WHAT HE REGARDS AS THE ILL-CONCEIVED "DEMOCRATIC EXPERIMENT" OF THE PAST DECADE. HIS FIRST PRIORITY IS LOYALTY TO HIM, EFFICIENCY AND TECHNICAL COMPETENCE IS DESIRABLE BUT SECONDARY. "IRRESPONSIBLE OPPOSITION" WILL NO LONGER BE TOLERATED. THIS ELIMINATES ANY FREEDOM OF EXPRESSION CERTAINLY IN THE PRESS AND VERY LIKELY PRIVATE AS WELL FOR THE FORESEEABLE FUTURE. A PURITANICAL REVULSION AT CORRUPTION SEEMS GENUINELY TO IMPEL BOTH DAUD AND HIS COLLEAGUES TOWARD ELIMINATION EVEN OF SOME OF DAUD'S OLD FRIENDS, AND OF COURSE TO CLOAK BASER MOTIVES. REVENGE FOR PAST INJURIES OR SLIGHTS, THE HIGHEST VALUE IN PUSHTUN CULTURE, INEVITABLY PLAYS A MAJOR ROLE IN ALL PERSONNEL DECISIONS. THE OPENNESS OF CONTACT BETWEEN WESTERN-EDUCATED AFGHANS AND FOREIGNERS, AN ORNAMENT OF THE PAST DECADE, WILL NO LONGER BE TOLERATED. THOSE STRUGGLING TO STAY AFLOAT IN THIS PURGE WILL INEVITABLY CONVEY TO US MANY NEGATIVE THINGS ABOUT THE REGIME "TO EXPLAIN" DECISIONS WHICH ARE PROBABLY TAKEN FOR QUESTIONS OF PERSONAL LOYALTY OR REVENGE RATHER THAN IDEOLOGY.

C. FINALLY THERE IS THE OPEN STRUGGLE BETWEEN THOSE WHO WISH TO SEE AFGHANISTAN CONTINUE ORIENTED SUBSTANTIALLY TOWARD THE WEST AND THOSE WHO ARE EAGER FOR A CLOSER THOUGH NOT

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NECESSARILY A SATELLITE RELATIONSHIP WITH THE USSR. THIS DIVISION OF OPINION WILL OFTEN NOT BE CONGRUENT WITH DIVISIONS ESTABLISHED ON EITHER OF THE OTHER TWO BATTLEFIELDS.

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5. IN THIS MAZE OF PERSONAL AND IDEOLOGICAL CONFLICTS, PROGRESS IN BUILDING A STABLE REGIME MUST INEVITABLY BE SLOW, CONTRADICTIONARY, HALTING, AND FRUSTRATING FOR AFGHANS AND FOREIGNERS ALIKE. ITS PACE IS COMPLICATED BY THE INTRICATE WEB OF FAMILY RELATIONSHIPS WHICH ATTENUATE IDEOLOGICAL AND PERSONAL CONFLICTS IN THIS SOCIETY. MOST AFGHAN OBSERVERS BELIEVE THAT THE PROCESS WILL REQUIRE UP TO SIX MONTHS TO PLAY OUT BEFORE SOME SORT OF EQUILIBRIUM IS REACHED. PROBABLY BEFORE THAT TIME, HOWEVER, IT WILL BECOME CLEAR WHETHER DAUD HAS MASTERED HIS YOUNG COLLEAGUES, OR THEY HAVE MASTERED HIM.

6. IT SEEMS HIGHLY LIKELY THAT SOME TIME IN THE WEEKS AHEAD THERE WILL BE ONE OR MORE EFFORTS AT SOME KIND OF "COUNTER COUP" BEFORE AUTHORITY PATTERNS ARE FIRMLY ESTABLISHED. COUP EFFORTS CAN COME FROM ANY OF THREE POSSIBLE DIRECTIONS:

(A) FROM THE YOUNGER MILITARY GROUP WHO MAY BECOME HIGHLY IMPATIENT OF DAUD'S CAUTIOUS LEADERSHIP AND SEEK TO REPLACE HIM WITH SOMEONE MORE READILY AMENABLE TO THEIR PRIORITIES?

(B) FROM DISENCHANTED OR DISCARDED MILITARY AND POLICE ELEMENTS CONCERNED ABOUT THE DIRECTION OF EVENTS AND THEIR PERSONAL DOWNFALLS WHO MAY SEEK TO REINSTATE THEIR OWN PRIMACY

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UNDER THE COVER OF SOME FORMAL VESTIGE OF THE MONARCHY;

(C) FROM DAUD HIMSELF, WHO IS WIDELY BELIEVED TO BE QUIETLY POSITIONING HIMSELF TO ELIMINATE SOME OF HIS YOUNGER ALLIES AT A PROPITIOUS MOMENT AND ASSERT FIRMLY HIS SOLE AUTHORITY. NO ONE WHO LIVED THROUGH THE PREVIOUS DAUD REGIME IN THE 1950S OR WHO KNOWS HIM PERSONALLY BELIEVES HE IS TEMPERAMENTALLY SUITED LONG TO PLAY A "GENERAL NAQUIB" ROLE IN THE NEW REVOLUTIONARY REGIME. HOWEVER, TEN YEARS ABSENCE FROM POWER HAS DEPRIVED DAUD OF A NUMBER OF OLDER COLLABORATORS ON WHOM HE WOULD HAVE OTHERWISE RELIED AS ALLIES. THEY ARE EITHER DEAD OR INACTIVE, CONSEQUENTLY, HIS PERSONAL POWER BASE IS PROBABLY RELATIVELY SMALL. A MISSTEP IN HANDLING THE EXPLOSIVE PUSHTUNISTAN ISSUE COULD WELL TRIGGER AN UPHEAVAL PREMATURE FOR HIS DESIGNS, AND THIS REALIZATION MAY ACCOUNT FOR THE GREATER CAUTION HE HAS BEEN SHOWING ON THIS QUESTION IN RECENT WEEKS. PREDICTION IS HIGHLY DANGEROUS, BUT MY PERSONAL ESTIMATE IS THAT THIS THIRD TYPE OF "COUP" IS THE MOST LIKELY OF THE THREE POSSIBILITIES.

7. THE SOVIET ROLE IN THESE EVENTS, BOTH PRE AND POST COUP, REMAINS MYSTERIOUS. THUS FAR WE HAVE NO RELIABLE SOURCES OF INTELLIGENCE ON WHICH TO DEPEND. LOGIC SIDES WITH THOSE WHO BELIEVE THE SOVIETS WERE AT MOST AWARE THAT SOMETHING WAS COMING AND HAVE SUBSEQUENTLY MOVED TO EXPLOIT THE RESULTS TO THE DEGREE POSSIBLE WITHOUT RISKING OVERT SIGNS OF INTERFERENCE. YET MANY HIGHLY INTELLIGENT AND POLITICALLY SENSITIVE AFGHANS PROFESS "TO KNOW" OF A MUCH MORE INTIMATE SOVIET RELATIONSHIP TO THE PLOTTERS. UNDENIABLY THE RUSSIAN-ORIENTED COMMUNIST PARTY, PARCHAM, IS WIDELY REPRESENTED AMONG THOSE OFFICIALS NOW BEING APPOINTED TO KEY POSITIONS IN VARIOUS MINISTRIES AS WELL AS ON THE CENTRAL COMMITTEE ITSELF. A NUMBER OF SOURCES CLAIM THAT THE COUP ITSELF WAS PARCHAM-INSTIGATED. (SEPTTEL WILL REPORT THIS ASPECT MORE FULLY.) WHATEVER THE TRUTH OF THE MATTER, WE BELIEVE DAUD IS VERY UNLIKELY TO PLAY DELIBERATELY INTO SOVIET HANDS, WHILE UNDOUBTEDLY READY TO MILK THE RUSSIANS FOR ALL POSSIBLE ECONOMIC AND POLITICAL SUPPORT FOR HIS OWN SCHEMES. WE ACCEPT AS PROBABLY TRUE HIS STATEMENTS THAT HE SINCERELY WANTS A CONTINUED US POLITICAL AND ECONOMIC PRESENCE ALONG WITH THAT OF OTHER FOREIGN MISSIONS AND INTERNATIONAL AGENCIES TO BALANCE SOVIET INFLUENCE AND TO HELP MAINTAIN AFGHAN INDEPENDENCE. AND IT IS ABUNDANTLY CLEAR THAT HE WANTS MASSIVE ECONOMIC HELP FROM ALL SOURCES, BUT ON HIS OWN TERMS. BUT WE ARE NOW WITNESSING AND WILL WITNESS A SUBSTANTIAL INCREASE

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IN OVERT ANTI-AMERICAN SENTIMENT AT VARIOUS OTHER LEVELS IN THE NEW REGIME. AND WE MUST ANTICIPATE AT LEAST SOME DEGREE OF PETTY HARASSMENT IN OUR DEALINGS WITH INDIVIDUAL OFFICIALS WHO, HAVING BEEN EXCLUDED FROM POWER FOR THE LAST DECADE, NOW OBTAIN KEY POSITIONS IN THE POLICE AND IN THE CIVILIAN MINISTRIES.

8. FOR THE PRESENT, DAUD REMAINS INDISPENSABLE TO EVERYONE FOR HE IS THE ONLY FIGURE ON THE HORIZON WHO FOR THE FORESEEABLE FUTURE WOULD BE RECOGNIZED AND ACCEPTED AS AN AUTHENTIC AFGHAN NATIONAL LEADER BY THE ARMY, THE TRIBES, THE EDUCATED ELITE, THE STUDENTS, AND THE MASS OF THE POPULATION, WHETHER THEY ARE LEFTIST-ORIENTED OR RATHER MORE ATTACHED TO TRADITIONAL AFGHAN VALUES. THIS WOULD NOT FORECLOSE SOME YOUNG MAJOR TRYING TO SEIZE POWER ON HIS OWN; BUT WE BELIEVE THESE INITIAL TWO MONTHS HAVE HAD A SOBERING EFFECT ON YOUNG OFFICERS WHO ARE NOW EXPERIENCING DIFFICULTIES OF ACTUAL RULE.

9. MOREOVER, DAUD IS INFINITELY MORE WILY AND POLITICALLY EXPERIENCED THAN HIS YOUNG ALLIES/OPONENTS. THE ODDS ARE THEREFORE CONSIDERABLY BETTER THAN EVEN THAT DAUD WILL GRADUALLY CONSOLIDATE HIS PERSONAL CONTROL OVER THE REGIME, RECREATING IN LARGE MEASURE THE PRICKLY, INWARD LOOKING, INDEPENDENT, HYPER-NATIONALISTIC, AND UNIQUELY AFGHAN TYPE OF POLITICAL SYSTEM WHICH HE LED IN THE LATE 1950S. BARRING A MORE ACTIVE SOVIET INTERVENTIONIST ROLE WHICH SEEMS TO US UNLIKELY, OR AN UNWISE DECISION BY BHUTTO TO "TEACH DAUD A LESSON," THIS SEEMS THE MOST PROBABLY PROSPECT FOR THE REGIME IN THE WEEKS AHEAD. TIME IS ON DAUD'S SIDE, NOT THE YOUNG OFFICERS. IF HE MANAGES TO STRETCH THE WEEKS INTO SIX MONTHS, HIS POSITION AS STRONGMAN SHOULD BE RELATIVELY SECURE.
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